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Professor Joshua Lederberg  
President, Rockefeller University  
New York, NY, USA

Dear Professor Lederberg:

I read your brief but perceptive piece on S N De in the July 25 issue of Current Science. How very true! Biology, despite so much of assimilated physics and chemistry, ~~still~~ is still in need of a greater logical/theoretical foundation. I am also very pleased to hear from a person of your standing and attainments that Dr De "is also an exemplar and inspiration for a boldness of challenge to the established wisdom, a style of thought that should be more aggressively taught by example as well as precept." I understand from Prof. S Ramaseshan, editor of Current Science that you nominated Prof. De for the Nobel Prize more than once. I would be grateful if you could send me copies of the proposal - the reasons why you thought Dr De ought to be honoured by the Nobel Committee - and the correspondence you had with the Swedish Academy in this regard. These documents will be of great use in compiling a biography of Dr De. I also know that when one Dr C C Carpenter failed to give Dr De credit for some of his achievement you drew his attention to Dr De's work. Now, can I get the current address of Dr C C Carpenter? I am sorry to bother you, but I need these things badly. There is a crying need in India today to make people recognise how callous our government and scientists had been in not according Dr De the honoured place he deserved. There is much debate in the United States, especially in NIH and NSF circles, about the adequacy of the peer review system. But peer review in India is awful. Scientific merit takes the lowest priority. There are people who with limited or no major achievement at all have been decorated so richly as if they are victorious generals returning from a war; and men like De, the silent achievers, are left unsung and unhonoured. I would like to create an awareness among Indian scientists and people about the need for being more just in matters of awards and rewards.

The Current Science special issue on Dr De has come out very well and we must congratulate Prof. Ramaseshan and guest editor Balaram, and thank all the contributors for readily agreeing to write despite short notice.

But for van Heyningen & Seal's book and Gene Garfield's tribute to De in the Current Comments column of Current Science, Dr De's outstanding work would still have remained unknown to most Indians. Now, with the special issue of Current Science, his greatness will come to light in India. I am planning to persuade the central government in Delhi to honour the great man by instituting a major Fellowship or award in his name. May be a letter from you to President of India, Mr R Venkataraman, detailing Dr De's achievements, the significance of his work and its impact and the need to atone for our earlier neglect would be helpful.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

*S. Arunachalam*

Subbiah Arunachalam  
Editor, IJT